

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

DESIGN AND LOCAL PROGRAMS

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**February 1, 1998**

**TO: Caltrans Employees, Representatives of California Local Government,  
and Representatives of the Private Sector:**

Enclosed is the *Local Assistance Procedures Manual*. This is the second of a set of three manuals that will replace the current *Local Programs Manuals* (Volumes I, II and III).

This manual describes the various procedures required to process Federal and State funded local transportation projects. Pertinent Local Programs Procedures (LPPs) that were issued prior to the date of this letter are now superseded by this new manual. These include LPP 95-07 "Reengineering," LPP 96-04 "Environmental Procedures," LPP 97-03 "Revised PS&E Procedures" and other applicable LPPs. To allow a phase-in period, projects may be processed using the superseded procedures and forms through June 30, 1998. After that date, the new procedures and forms are mandatory.

Previous procedures were based on Caltrans' reengineering concepts of eliminating multiple reviews and delegating certain responsibilities to the administering agencies. These procedures focused on projects off the National Highway System (NHS).

With the issuance of this new manual, the reengineering concepts have been carried to a higher level by delegating certain responsibilities to administering agencies for projects on the NHS. This delegation transfers the most project accountability to the administering agencies. Highlights of each chapter are as follows:

**Chapter 1** *Introduction and Overview:* This chapter contains a background on the local assistance subject, lists related manuals and cites a chapter-by-chapter summary. Two project development flowcharts are provided to show the overall process for Federal and State funded projects with reference to applicable chapters.

**Chapter 2** *Roles and Responsibilities:* This chapter explains program/project responsibility of the major parties involved--primarily, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Caltrans and the administering agency (referred to in this manual as local agency). A table at the end of this chapter

summarizes the roles and responsibilities of the parties involved for projects on and off the NHS.

- Chapter 3    ***Project Authorization:*** The authorization process is described for different phases of a project. Advance construction authorization, FTA transfer and CTC allocation vote processes are also discussed. New "Request for Authorization" forms have been added for each of the major phases of project development (preliminary engineering, right of way, and construction).
- Chapter 4    ***Agreements:*** All agreements required for Federal-aid reimbursement and other requirements are contained in this chapter.
- Chapter 5    ***Accounting/Invoices:*** Information about local agency invoices for reimbursement and the accounting process are discussed. Sample invoices are provided for clarification.
- Chapter 6    ***Environmental Procedures:*** This chapter provides an overview of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process and the other Federal environmentally-related processes which must be completed prior to receiving Federal-aid. Since the majority of Federal-aid local assistance projects qualify for Categorical Exclusion (CE) from the provisions of NEPA, this chapter is limited to preliminary environmental studies, completion of the Preliminary Environmental Study (PES) form, and processing of a CE.

Procedures regarding the use of the Preliminary Environmental Studies (PES) form and Categorical Exclusion determinations have been changed to clarify the involvement of Caltrans' environmental specialists. The FHWA's involvement in the PES determination has also been clarified.

This chapter has also been expanded to include: 1) additional guidance on Early Coordination Meetings, and 2) review checklists for ensuring "Complete and Sufficient" Section 4(f) documents, Cultural Resources Reports, Biological Assessments for Section 7, Wetlands Reports, and Floodplain Reports. The new information should prove useful to local agencies when developing consultant contracts, reviewing staff or consultant prepared technical reports, and facilitating more expedient reviews by Caltrans' staff. The latest available FHWA guidance on the preparation of environmental assessments and environmental impact statements has also been identified.

- Chapter 7 *Field Reviews:* This chapter discusses the need for a field review. The requirement of a field review for projects on the NHS has changed from mandatory for all projects to projects that are major complex (e.g., corridor-type) only. This would be determined by Caltrans. For projects off the NHS, a field review is optional, as determined by the local agency.
- Chapter 8 *Public Hearings:* This chapter deals with the need for public hearings. Discussion on "Open Forum Public Hearing" is added to allow for an open meeting format similar to a map showing or a project briefing. This hearing usually occurs during circulation of a draft environmental document prior to making any commitment to a specific design alternative or location.
- Chapter 9 *Civil Rights and Disadvantaged Business Enterprises:* This chapter contains the necessary requirements to comply with Federal law relevant to the Civil Rights Act of 1964/1968 and the Disadvantaged Business Enterprises Program.
- Chapter 10 *Consultant Selection:* Federal and State law for selecting consultants is explained as procedures and requirements for local agencies. Caltrans does not approve selection of consultants nor does it approve consultant agreements.
- Chapter 11 *Design Standards:* Design standards for projects on and off the NHS are discussed, as well as when local design standards are allowed. A discussion on design of pedestrian facilities consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act and the State Architect is provided.
- Chapter 12 *Plans, Specifications and Estimate:* A discussion on Federal requirements for contract plans, specifications and estimates (PS&E) is provided. A new PS&E checklist is also provided. The checklist includes the required Federal contract provisions. Local agencies will self-certify their completed PS&E and Caltrans, as a minimum, will review the checklist for completeness. Sample "Boiler Plate" contract documents are provided through the Local Programs Internet Home Page. After July 1, 1998, Caltrans standard plans, standard specifications and standard special provisions in English units will not be maintained.
- Chapter 13 *Right of Way:* An overview of right of way activities for local Federal-aid projects is described in this chapter. The activities are described relative to the entire project development process

through project completion. Local agencies will continue to self-certify their project right of way and Caltrans will accept it as to form and content only.

- Chapter 14** *Utility Facilities:* Procedures are described when utility facilities are involved in a Federal-aid project. The Caltrans District Utility Coordinator will no longer: 1) certify that arrangements have been made with owners of all utility encroachments so that adequate control of the right of way will be achieved (this is now part of the local agency right of way certification), and 2) certify that the local agency has been informed of Caltrans' policy on high and low risk underground facilities (this subject is explained within the chapter). The Coordinator will, however, be required to approve a local agency's request for Specific Authorization for utility relocation.
- Chapter 15** *Advertise and Award Project:* This chapter discusses the advertise and award procedures. Except for major NHS projects, local agencies will follow the same procedures described in this chapter for all Federal-aid projects. Construction administration procedures for NHS projects considered "major" will be established on a project-by-project basis and approved by Caltrans and the FHWA before construction will be authorized. Two checklists are now required: 1) a Local Agency Contract Administration Checklist, which will be completed and submitted with the "Request for Authorization for Construction," and 2) a Resident Engineer's Construction Contract Administration Checklist, which is to be submitted as part of the award package.
- Chapter 16** *Administer Construction Contracts:* This chapter contains a complete description of construction administration as required by Federal laws. For projects off the NHS, local agencies may use their own locally approved Quality Assurance Program (QAP) as long as it is the same as they use for other non-Federal-aid projects. For projects on the NHS, the local agencies are required to follow the Caltrans' approved QAP described in this chapter. Except for process reviews, Caltrans will not review construction activities.
- Chapter 17** *Project Completion:* Final inspection procedures are described for Federal-aid projects exempt and not exempt from FHWA oversight. Also, procedures for completing final reports and forms are described.

- Chapter 18** *Maintenance:* Maintenance reviews of completed local Federal-aid highway projects shall continue to be reported by the District Local Assistance Engineer. This review shall be done either throughout the year or during the month of October. Each county shall continue to submit to Caltrans any additions or exclusions from its mileage of maintained county highways, in the month of May (or anytime for relinquishments), in order for Caltrans to meet its July 1st certification to the State Controller.
- Chapter 19** *Process Reviews:* Various process reviews for Federal and State funded projects are discussed in this chapter. Caltrans uses process reviews to ensure that reengineered local assistance procedures are being followed.
- Chapter 20** *Deficiencies and Sanctions:* This chapter presents examples of project deficiencies in complying with this manual's requirements and the consequences or sanctions for these deficiencies. An appeal process is also discussed to appeal sanctions or decisions received from a district.

This manual may be accessed from the Internet at "<http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LocalPrograms>" and by proceeding to "Local Assistance Manuals." If you have any questions or wish to suggest changes for future revisions, please contact your District Local Assistance Engineer.

Sincerely,

*Original signed by*

**ROBERT L. BUCKLEY**  
Program Manager  
Design and Local Programs

Enclosure

**Caltrans Employees  
Representatives of California Local Government  
Representatives of the Private Sector  
February 1, 1998  
Page 6**

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